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On the Division of Heritable Property, and its Influence on the Distribution of Wealth. Translated from the French of M. Passy, by Sir JOHN P. BOILEAU, Bart.

[*Read before the Statistical Society of London, 15th May, 1843.*]

THE question is often raised as to what is the result of the law in France which regulates heritable property. It is alleged by many that it tends to excessive equalization of wealth, by granting equal rights to equal degrees of relationship; and that as each estate is divided into as many portions as the possessor leaves children or collateral relations, and in each generation the patrimony is again subdivided, a gradual diminution of fortune will result, equivalent to the smaller parcels into which it is portioned. Are these assertions well founded? Is it a fact that the successive divisions of property tend to bring all classes to a common level? What has been the result of them up to the present time? These questions, important on more than one account, deserve attentive examination.

First. We may observe, that, in spite of all the different modes of legislating for inheritances, there is not a country in which wealth is not unequally divided. Amongst the ancients, where the mass of the population were slaves, legislators in vain attempted to preserve a greater equality of fortunes, the want of which fostered public and private corruption, and hastened the ruin of the state; but their most stringent laws and complicated combinations equally failed to attain this end. The institutions of Lycurgus himself gave way before the powerful natural causes tending to create inequality.

Amongst modern nations different systems of inheritance have prevailed; different frequently even in the same country, in different classes of society; and yet their result was essentially the same, as regards the disproportion found in fortunes. Thus, while the right of primogeniture and the system of entail contributed to concentrate more and more among the feudal nobility of Europe those domains of which they had the exclusive property, the custom of equal succession did not prevent the remainder of the population from dividing itself into rich and poor. Nay, more, in proportion as riches became multiplied and diffused through the advance of industry, inequality gained ground in the trading classes, and families rose within them to an opulence which enabled

them to vie in luxury, and occasionally in importance, with the most illustrious and distinguished of the nobility.

Thus it was in Italy, where, in some cities, plebeian families, having accumulated vast wealth, formed ruling aristocracies, and yet retained the custom, profoundly rooted in their habits, of dividing their succession amongst their children. All possible differences of fortunes existed also in the towns of Germany, Holland, and the Swiss cantons. Nowhere has the division of heritable property prevented their formation or continuance; and these differences were everywhere of an extent corresponding to the facility which the institutions or position of the country gave to the development of industry and mercantile activity.

In the Slavonian countries of Europe, none but an allodial tenure has ever prevailed; and there, in consequence, for many generations and ages a successive division of property has been put to the proof. The possession of land, it is true, was exclusively allowed to the nobility; but as the only exception to the equal rights of children of the same marriage was, that females received only a fourth of the value of the landed property, everything seemed to ensure more equality in the fortunes, because this privileged class, disdaining the industrial professions, had no other means of subsistence. But this was far from being the case. In no country has the inequality of fortunes been more conspicuous than in Poland and Russia. In Poland, especially, where the nobility are very numerous, and only five estates have been entailed upon the eldest son, a few families obtained almost regal wealth, while the greater part of the others fell into complete indigence: 150,000 nobles are still computed to exist in Podolia and Volhynia, and the property in almost the whole of the soil is concentrated into the hands of about 50 families.

Such uniformity of results from facts of different epochs, and occurring under entirely different circumstances, suffices to prove that if laws of inheritance are able to effect the classification of landed properties according to extent, they cannot confine or reduce the possession of them within any fixed limits. Indeed, the unequal distribution of wealth is too essential to the welfare of mankind to have been left to the chance of social regulations. Numerous causes—causes whose activity no legislative enactments can destroy—are constantly combining to create and preserve it. Some of the most powerful are so simple and evident that they have always been known, and it will suffice to allude to them: such are the unequal number of births to a marriage, and the difference of tastes and faculties in individuals. It was said by Aristotle, 2000 years ago, that the legislators of Greece should endeavour, before labouring to discover combinations for the equal distribution of wealth, to discover how to render every marriage equally fruitful. No change can take place on this point; and, in all ages, the impossibility that each father will leave the same number of heirs, must create a sensible difference in fortune and condition of life.

Diversity of tastes, inclinations, and faculties has no less influence. Men are not all born equal in strength or talents; and those qualities which lead to success are not equally distributed. In every career the most active, intelligent, and prudent outstrip their rivals, and gain most recompence by their more energetic or better directed efforts. Providence itself, in endowing these with higher faculties, has decreed to

them the most advantageous posts, and they only obey their natural vocation in rising above the crowd.

But if these causes act equally on every step of the social ladder, if they occasion inequalities in the humblest as well as highest ranks, there are others destined to secure to the more opulent those advantages of which they are already in possession : such are—the superior information arising from a more enlarged and careful education ; the facility of accumulation belonging to wealth already realized ; the different fecundity of marriages in different classes of society.

It is greatly advantageous to the rich to possess an intellectual superiority, arising from an education the benefits of which are denied to the rest of the population. They naturally obtain all those posts, stations, offices, and professions which, requiring information only gained by long and expensive studies, are the most liberally remunerated.

In all matters of business, and in every career of life, the knowledge and the habits of thought which they have acquired by the serious course of study of their youth, come to their aid, and ensure numerous means of success, thus affording sources of wealth from which they alone can draw, and which go on continually increasing and renewing the opulence transmitted to them from the past.

The power of increasing itself, inherent in wealth, serves no less to maintain the inequality of fortunes : on the one hand, opulent persons can, from their income, accumulate savings ; and on the other, greater advantages arise to them from the greater resources they can command. “ Make your first million, and others will make themselves,” is an old proverb, full of truth. The larger any speculations or monied operations are, the fewer persons are able to undertake them ; and the less competition they admit, the more they are lucrative. This is the principal reason why the great capitalists realize such enormous profits. They alone can undertake the great speculations ; they alone can wait for distant results from their calculations ; they alone are capable of becoming the purchasers of the greatest factories, establishments, and properties. In fact, when we look at the opportunities for gain and accumulation possessed by the very opulent, we shall perceive that their ostentation, the irregular habits brought on so commonly by satiety of enjoyments, the vanity of rank, and the ennui of idleness, are not more than what is required to preserve society from the abuses inseparable from the undue concentration of wealth.

To the above causes we must add another, which is very influential—the unequal number of children born to a marriage in the different classes of society.

It would naturally be supposed that the facility of bringing up children tended to favour their multiplication ; but it is not so : whether it arise from the difficulty of establishing them in life, from the fear of their degrading from the station of their birth, or from any other cause, it is a fact that rich families, taken in general, are those which have the fewest children, and their ranks would become thinner, generation after generation, if they were not gradually recruited by new families of recently acquired wealth. This assertion is so contrary to the generally received opinion, that it is necessary to support it by undeniable proofs, and these we shall draw from statistical and historical facts.

Every one is aware that the population is distributed into groups

differently composed. In towns (particularly in large towns) we find the greatest proportion of rich families; and if it be true that they have in general the fewest children, then the average number of births should be sensibly affected in those places where they principally reside. Now this is exactly what we find: throughout the whole of Europe marriages are less prolific in large than small towns, and less again in these than the rural districts. The following facts are established as regards France from existing documents:—

In France, from 1826 to 1836, the average number of children born annually was 904,702; and as the average number of marriages during the same period was 256,927, it follows there has been to each marriage a little more than 3·52 births. Now, if we take the 39 principal towns of more than 20,000 inhabitants, we shall find they contain a population of 2,634,532 souls, and their annual average of births has been only 65,290, and of marriages 21,374, or 3·05 births to a marriage. Thus the average of births in these towns is less than that of the country in general by 0·47, and less than the average of rural districts and towns under 20,000 souls united, by 0·51, or nearly 15 per cent.

Now, there can be no doubt that the less productiveness of marriages in the large towns is owing to the larger proportion of opulent and easy families to be found among their population; for these towns are far from showing universally the same results, and the number of births to a marriage varies correspondingly with the particular character of the population. This will be evident from comparing facts in those towns where the variation is the most remarkable.

Towns of more than 20,000 souls where Marriages are least productive.

Towns.	Births to a Marriage.
Le Mans	2·45
Tours	2·51
Versailles	2·58
Angers	2·62
Caen	2·66
Clermont Ferrand	2·74

Towns of more than 20,000 souls where Marriages are most productive.

Towns.	Births to a Marriage.
Saint Etienne	4·56
Nismes	4·02
Boulogne	3·98
Marseilles	3·82
Dunkirk	3·76
Limoges	3·75

It appears, therefore, that the average of births is least in those towns where the mass of the inhabitants live upon their means, and greatest where, as in manufacturing and maritime towns, the working class is most numerous. We may remark, also, that in these latter towns the annual average of births not only exceeds greatly that of towns of more than 20,000 souls, but even the general average of France.

As considerable difference exists in the number of children to a marriage in various parts of France, it is desirable, to remove all doubts, to compare towns of the same districts, but varying in employment and character of population; and we bring together for this purpose manufacturing or maritime towns, and others, in the same departments, which contain but a small population of the working class.

Manufacturing or Maritime Towns.		Other Towns.	
St. Quentin	4·09	Laon	3·01
Carcassonne	3·89	Narbonne	3·14
Vire	3·33	Caen	2·66
Aubuisson	3·01	Gueret	2·67
Louviers	3·53	Evreux	2·53
Marseilles	3·82	Aix	3·06
Lodeve	4·79	Montpellier	3·69
St. Etienne	4·56	Montbrisson	3·07
Rheims	3·41	Châlons sur Marne	3·15
Laval	3·20	Château Gonthier	2·20
Sedan	4·11	Mezières	3·30
Romorantin	3·26	Blois	2·66
Corbeil and Essonne	3·51	Versailles	2·58

The disproportion between these different averages is very considerable, amounting in some to more than 40 per cent; and it is remarkable that, with the exception of Marseilles, Aubuisson, and Laval, the maritime and manufacturing towns give more births to a marriage than the departments to which they belong. The difference in this respect is considerable, varying from 1·30 to 0·20 plus.

It is to be regretted that, in the statistics of France, published by the Minister of Commerce in 1837, the *movement* of the population in the capital towns of arrondissements is only given. Thus we are without information respecting those important manufacturing towns, Mulhouse, Elbœuf, Tourcoing, Roubaix. Everything, however, leads us to affirm that their returns would have exactly agreed with those we are able to produce.

The effect which riches have upon restraining the fecundity of marriages is nowhere more apparent than in Paris. The most opulent families of France congregate there; and as they select certain quarters of the town for their residence, the facts brought out in them are more remarkable and complete than anywhere. Now, at Paris, as has been found by the investigations made under the direction of the Comte de Chabrol, the average of births to a marriage is, in the different arrondissements, in regular inverse proportion to the easy or opulent circumstances of the population. The following table is drawn up from the averages of the five years preceding 1837. The arrondissements are placed, for greater clearness, in order of their least fecundity.

Arrondisse- ments.	Births to a Marriage.	Arrondisse- ments.	Births to a Marriage.
2	1·87	9	2·39
10	1·94	7	2·57
3	2·00	6	2·59
1	2·08	8	2·72
11	2·12	5	2·89
4	2·38	12	3·24

These figures are decisive as regards France. In Paris, the marriages show fewer births where the population is the richest. In the four first arrondissements, united, which are those where the most opulent families reside, the number of children to a marriage is only 1·97; that of the four poorest arrondissements, on the contrary, is 2·86; and the difference between the two arrondissements placed at the extremities of the scale (the 2 and 12), is as 1·87 to 3·24, or more than 73 per cent. These facts deserve the more attention because, in spite of the reasons which determine the inhabitants of Paris to choose peculiar localities

according to their respective circumstances, some poor families will be found in the quarters inhabited by the rich, and some rich families in the quarters occupied by the poor, which fact necessarily diminishes the difference we should establish if it were possible to separate completely the different classes of the population.

We arrive at this important consideration, that if the 2, 3, 10, and 1 arrondissements, where the richest families of Paris reside, were not continually recruited from families freshly acquiring wealth, the actual number of inhabitants would not be maintained. Not only the children born there are less numerous than their parents, but as we must deduct those who die in infancy, or who never marry,—and that we must estimate these at least at a quarter of the whole, in a town where 13 children out of 29 do not live to 21,—it follows that in three generations, or the space of a century, the population would be reduced to half its number. Assuredly, where the population decreases so rapidly, it is not in danger of being impoverished by division of inheritances, but quite the contrary; and the extinction of many of its members must accumulate property and wealth among the remainder.

I have not, in my preceding observations, noticed the illegitimate births, though they amount, during the last 30 years, to one-sixth of the whole; for two reasons,—first, because no illegitimate children are acknowledged and admitted to take shares in the heritable property; secondly, that they take place almost entirely in the poorest classes, and their number only proves the greater productiveness of these classes.

With respect to marriages, the number of which must necessarily influence the progress of population, the average is the same in towns of more than 20,000 souls and the rest of the country. In both they are 1 in 132 persons; but as many towns in France do not give the full number of the population when the census is taken, it is probable that the urban population is greater than shown by official documents, and, consequently, that there is not in reality one marriage to 132 persons.*

If the facts we have recited suffice to prove that the rich classes multiply much less than the rest of the population, history also corroborates it, and affords us such data as make it reasonable to believe that nature herself indicates it as a law always in operation, though restrained in some countries temporarily, and as an exception to the rule.

For example, we find that, in the remotest times, nations have been struck with surprise at the successive disappearance of a number of families who had all figured prominently in religion or politics. In ancient Greece the old noble families of Corinth or Athens quickly disappeared. The dominant families in Sparta, amongst whom the land of Laconia had been divided, gradually diminished, and at the end of a few centuries one-seventh alone of them remained. The gentry of Rome, who formed the patrician body, in like manner, could not preserve themselves pure; and, though the most illustrious plebeian families were successively admitted amongst them, that body was rapidly reduced in number.

* I wanted to compare, out of France, the average, in different classes of the population, of births and marriages; but the official statements published in England, Belgium, and some other parts of Europe, only give the amount in counties; and I have therefore not been able to derive sufficiently accurate information to use it in this paper.

Times nearer to our own offer many similar examples. Throughout Europe a large number of historical names, and a still larger number of historical families, have disappeared. If the lesser nobility have remained more numerous, it must be attributed partly to the gradual multiplication of letters of nobility, and partly to the state of indigence in which in some provinces vast numbers of the gentry lived, and which left them strangers to those habits of caution by which opulent families are governed. It is incontestable that, in those countries where titles ceased to be an object of ambition, the nobility has constantly decreased in number. Holland has preserved but few; and in one of its provinces, Zealand, there is not a single one of the families remaining which were anciently inscribed on the registers of the equestrian order.

What, too, have become of the larger part of those houses which composed the aristocracy which governed the ancient republics of Switzerland and Italy? Scarcely a descendant is to be found at Venice of those who were written in the *Libro d'Oro* at its establishment. Berne had seen at the end of the last century half of the noble families of its founders extinct, and a great part of those also who, since the middle of the sixteenth century, had succeeded in perpetuating themselves in her councils.

Certainly the vicissitudes of political life have contributed to diminish the number of historical families; but as a great part of those not exposed to these vicissitudes has also perished, we cannot doubt that much of the change they have undergone must be attributed to the ideas and sentiments which riches and station are certain to produce. If the most opulent part of the population of Paris, which has not two children to a marriage, were not kept up and renewed by the accession to its ranks of families recently enriched, it would be speedily diminished, and its progress towards extinction would be more rapid than that of any of the aristocratic bodies of which history preserves the recollection.

Everything, therefore, attests that numerous and different causes concur to maintain the unequal distribution of wealth; and one of the most important amongst these, is the less fecundity of marriage in the higher classes of society. Not only are there fewer heirs than inheritances, owing to the small number of children brought up by rich families, but the greater number which are born in the lower classes hinders them from acquiring those resources which would enable them to cope for the higher advantages of property.

But if everything in the order of society repudiates the bringing of fortune to exactly the same level, do not successive divisions cause the ancient inequalities of wealth gradually to disappear? Do they not tend to make the fortunes of private individuals more similar, and to bring gradually nearer and nearer to each other the different ranks of society? Facts must answer; and we will consult them, in the hope of appreciating what has taken place amongst us in the distribution of wealth.

The prevailing opinion, that riches diffuse themselves, and pass from the hands of their possessors, disseminating themselves amongst the mass of the population, is based on the incontrovertible fact of the gradual multiplication of subdivisions of the soil. Subdivisions to the number of 123,630,328 are now admitted in France; and it is argued that this parcelling out of the soil cannot have occurred without the

number of landed proprietors having immeasurably augmented. But this is a great error; there is nothing really in common between the parcelling out of the land and the state or quantity of private fortunes; and territorial subdivisions may be multiplied without wealth being displaced or subdivided into smaller or more numerous portions. What, in fact, are the causes of the breaking up of estates, but these two—alienations and hereditary successions. Now alienations, though they may cause a change in the form and dimensions of estates, cannot affect the distribution of wealth. Every vendor, who divides his property to obtain a better price for it, receives the value of every portion sold; and each purchaser in turn pays out of capital he already possesses: this transaction does not, therefore, change their former positions; but allowing each to realize his fortune in the way most suited to his interests or tastes is equally profitable to all.

I admit that in a great part of France the agricultural classes are gradually acquiring property, and pay prices for small lots which induces land to be sold in detail. But this fact, which proves that the labouring class is prospering, and that land yields the best return for money to those who cultivate it themselves, is injurious to no one. Proprietors desirous of a larger income than they derive from their estate, cannot complain of the circumstance which increases their marketable value, and enables them to exchange their land advantageously for other kinds of property. On this ground, the tendency to accumulate on the part of the labouring class is very favourable.

As to the divisions of inheritances, they contribute much to parcel out the soil. Cohairs often prefer, instead of selling an estate entire, and dividing the produce, to lay it out in lots, and each to keep his own: but these operations only have influence on fortunes in proportion to the number of inheritances to inheritors; and if in some instances new proprietors are thereby created, in others old ones are only enriched, and land is more divided, while proprietors are fewer.

We can, therefore, learn nothing, from what is taking place in this parcelling out of the soil, of the changes which have occurred in the distribution of landed property. We must consult another fact, and that is, the results of the registers of landed property. The exact number of proprietors is, however, by no means to be ascertained from these, for they only give the total of the different parcels belonging to the same tax-payer in each collector's district; and as many persons have property in different districts, more names would appear on the registers than there are proprietors. This fact need not, however, invalidate the conclusions to be derived from the alteration which has taken place in the number of registrations; for the causes which make them more numerous than the proprietors having at all times operated in the same manner, it follows that every change in their figures indicates an analogous change in the distribution of landed property.

Let us see, then, what has taken place according to known official returns in these registrations.

In 1815 there were 10,083,751 names enregistered; in 1835 it appears there were 10,893,528, giving an increase in 20 years of 8 per cent. of proprietors—an important fact, if the population had remained stationary; but to estimate it rightly, we must consider what has been, during the same time, the progress of the population. Now, in 1815, it

was only 29,152,743, while in 1835 it had reached 33,326,573—an increase of 14 per cent. Thus while the number of proprietors increased only 8 per cent., the population increased 14 per cent.; proving that, instead of increasing in equal ratio, the number of proprietors is proportionately diminished. Lastly, it was computed, in 1815, that France contained 100 fixed capitalists in every 290 inhabitants, but in 1835 only 100 in 305, showing clearly that the number of proprietors, as compared to the rest of the population, has decreased $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or $\frac{1}{40}$ th.

It must not, moreover, be imagined (if the number of proprietors has not equally increased with the rest of the population) that the addition of 8 per cent. to its number has diminished the share belonging to each individual. The progress of wealth is, in our days, more rapid than that of population; and, since 1815, real property has improved more than 8 per cent. Neither does the increase of names on the registers of land arise entirely from division among coheirs, for a large proportion of new buildings has occasioned the registration of new proprietors.

After having marked out the real nature of the changes which have taken place since 1815 in the distribution of fixed property, and shown that the number of persons amongst whom it is divided has decreased in proportion to the state of the population, it becomes important to show what has taken place with regard to moveable property. For this we have only one source of information—the number of deaths and the number of claims of inheritance. If we had an exact statement for a sufficient number of years, it would be easy to deduce our facts, and their correctness would be indisputable; but Government possesses only one return of claims of inheritance previous to 1833, viz. in 1823; and it is hazardous to come to conclusions from any single document. I think, however, that we may assume this return of 1823 to be a faithful representation of the circumstances of the times, for the following reasons:—

The relation which exists between the annual number of deaths and the claims of inheritance only varies in those years of serious epidemics which fall upon and carry off principally children and the poorer classes. The mortality is then considerable; and as it is comparatively less amongst the class of proprietors, the average of claims of inheritance is comparatively less than that of deaths. The converse takes place when mortality is least. Now, in 1823 the amount of deaths was something less than in preceding years, and this would have some weight if the deaths alone of 1823 were compared with the claims of inheritance of the same year. But we ought not to proceed in this manner; for as the payment of duty on the transmission of inheritances only takes place six months after the death of the persons whose estates pass into other hands, the claims of inheritance occurring in any given year ought to be compared not with the deaths of that year, but with those to which they have immediate reference, viz., to six months of that year, and six of the preceding one. Calculated in this manner, the deaths to which the claims of inheritance correspond in the year 1823 are 760,255; and these figures are sufficiently beyond the average of the six preceding years, of 747,213, to prove that the claims of inheritance in 1823 did not, in comparison with the deaths, exceed the mean proportion of that period.

The following are the results of the only years for which we have documents:—

Year.	Claims.	Deaths.	Proportion.
1823	393,606	760,255	1 in 1·92
1833	408,772	873,139	1 in 2·13
1834	404,784	865,253	1 in 2·13
1835	424,819	867,220	1 in 2·04
1836	407,477

In comparing the figures of the year 1823 with the mean derived from those of the three years 1833–4–5, we find that, while the deaths have increased 14 per cent., claims of inheritance have only increased 5 per cent.; in other words, that out of 1,000 persons who died in the year to which the claims of inheritance of 1823 refer, 520 were proprietors of fixed or moveable property; while of 1,000 persons dead between the 1st July, 1832, and the 30th June, 1835, there were only 477 such proprietors. These figures show that the tendency to the concentration of wealth generally is such, that while those who enjoy it are *actually* increased 5 per cent., they are only *relatively* to the rest of the population increased $4\frac{1}{2}$.

It appears from this result, that moveable property has become proportionately much more concentrated than fixed property. Claims of inheritance include all kinds of property but that of the funds; and as we know from the landed registers that the number of proprietors has only diminished $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. in proportion to the total population, we must refer to the diminished number of proprietors of moveable property for the change which has brought down the number of persons dying in possession of fixed and moveable property from 520 to 477 in the 1,000.

We must, however, acknowledge, although the figures we have employed are exact, although our conclusions from them are well founded, and we have clear proof that both landed and moveable property is fallen into fewer hands, compared with the whole population, we do not think the data sufficiently numerous to authorize us to determine without fear of exaggeration the exact progress made since 1823. The three years in which we have positive information, and of which we have taken the average for our calculations, have been affected, as regards their deaths, by unusual circumstances. In the number of deaths corresponding to the claims of inheritance, the six last months of 1832 are included, when the mortality was greatly augmented by the cholera: the year 1834 was also a very fatal one; and hence, doubtless, arises a part of the extraordinary increase of deaths which we find in the three years ending 1835. It is to be regretted that the return of 1836 is not yet known. We know that there were 407,477 claims of inheritance in the course of that year; and it would have been of the highest interest to be able to establish, by the aid of a new fact, how far the results we have pointed out are fixed or accidental.

Let us now investigate what change has occurred in the amount of fortunes distributed amongst the class possessing property. Wealth has annually been increasing in France, owing to the progressive inventions which add to the productive powers of society, and the constant accumulation of savings beyond income, and as the individuals possessing

wealth have not increased in proportion to the population, the amount of their wealth must have been augmented. To arrive at this fact, we ought to compare the number of claims of inheritance year by year with the estimated value of these inheritances; but our facts here are insufficient, and only allow us to make approximations. Before 1826 the sum received in the registration office was given only in one general total, and their progressive increase shows this fact alone, that, like all other receipts, the duty on change of property has progressively increased since 1826; but since 1836 the value of property transmitted by will or inheritance has been officially declared, and as it rose from 1,345,711,516 fr. in 1826, to 1,560,320,825 fr. in 1836, there can be no doubt that the mass of wealth has followed in similar proportion, and increased in 11 years nearly 16 per cent. But what influence has this had on the average amount of private fortunes? We want, to estimate it correctly, the return of the claims of inheritance of 1836; and we shall then only possess that of 1823 and the four years prior to 1837. Nevertheless, as it is certain that the amount of real and personal property transmitted by deaths was less in 1823 than 1826, and as since 1826 the progress shows that it must have been at least $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 per cent., we will adopt, to make our comparison, the figures of the year 1826 as those of 1823, in order not to exaggerate, but keep quite below the amount, and so speak more confidently.

The following are the results:—

	Francs.	
1823 . .	3,419	} Average value of inheritances.
1833 . .	3,589	
1834 . .	3,652	
1835 . .	3,647	
1836 . .	3,805	

The increasing value of inheritances from 1823 to 1836 proves that, in taking the figures of 1826 to represent those of 1823, we have rather diminished the difference which this latter presents in reality: at all events, it is evident that the average increase of the inheritances declared has been $11\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. at least, and this fact demonstrates that a similar augmentation has taken place in the fortunes of individuals.

This fact deserves great consideration. If the classes possessing property have not multiplied as fast as the rest of the community, they have at least gained 4 per cent. in the 13 years prior to 1836; and yet, far from the fortunes of individuals being diminished by it, the general progress of wealth has increased them 11 per cent. Nothing, then, is more evident than that the rich classes not only preserve the wealth they have acquired, but draw towards themselves additional wealth, which the progress of improvement and industry is continually creating and diffusing.

The want of authentic documents will not allow us to push our investigations further without fear of error. We may only add, that in the last 10 years the transfers of property by sale or gift during life have increased more in value than number. We shall not venture to give figures, as it is impossible to distinguish precisely, and class accurately, proceedings which are only shown summarily in the general financial statements.

Let us now review the facts which we have established with the

assistance of data which, on account of their small number, we have been obliged to employ with great caution.

In the 20 years previous to 1836 the total population of France has increased 14 per cent., and as the number of registered properties has in the same time increased only 8 per cent., it is clear that the number of proprietors, instead of increasing in the same ratio as the rest of the population, has become less numerous, in the proportion of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The great number of houses and factories established since 1815 renders this fact more remarkable, as they have necessarily increased the number of registered properties, and added new and abundant means of increase to fixed property.

Secondly, personal property has concentrated itself even more than real. Judging from a comparison between deaths and claims of inheritance, proprietors of fixed and moveable capital who in 1823 formed the $\frac{520}{1000}$ of the whole population, 12 years after were only $\frac{477}{1000}$. We have given our reasons for thinking that this change, though it may have been considerable, is probably not quite as great as these figures would show it.

Finally, while the total wealth of France has augmented in 10 years 16 per cent., individual fortunes have augmented $11\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the average: thus benefiting a class of proprietors which, during the same period, has only contributed 4 per cent. to the (little more than) 7 per cent. total increase of the population. Such are the changes which have taken place in France in the distribution and condition of private fortunes. Division of inheritances, far from having produced equality in the distribution of wealth, has been overcome by the causes tending to inequality, and a tendency towards concentration has resulted. When we look at this fact, taking place in spite of a system of the descent of property the most favourable to its diffusion, we cannot mistake the force of one of those primeval laws before which nations must bow, and of which they can neither attempt to stop or change the course, without bringing on themselves greater evils than those they seek to cure.

If experience has shown that institutions which give a stimulus to the natural causes of inequality in riches, never fail to enervate and corrupt the few, and to keep the mass in a state of indigence productive of physical sufferings and moral and intellectual infirmity, every thing proves that institutions destined to impose limits to the aggrandizement of private fortunes, or restrict their hereditary descent, would be yet more fatal. Those powerful springs which give full development to energy and industry would be broken if individuals were prevented from rising to the greatest height their faculties permitted, or from preparing for and leaving to their children the best position in their power. The most intelligent would cease their exertions when they had attained a given amount of fortune, and society, deprived of the impulse they communicate to it, would soon sink and retrograde. This has been most clearly demonstrated. All the improvements of society are owing to the inequality of wealth. It is this which has, by ensuring to one portion of the community the comforts and leisure indispensable to the cultivation of the mind, permitted the arts and sciences to flourish for the good of the human race; and everything which would oppose it, must contract or dry up that fountain of light of which society has need to extend the

empire of man progressively over external matter, and continue to increase his happiness and dignity.

It is assuredly to be regretted that the share of every individual in the good things of this world is not larger, and that in the midst of the most flourishing societies such great misery and affliction should exist; but let us look back at the point from whence we started—let us recall the denuded state of the first generations of the world, and we shall admit, that if civilization, in its progress, distributes unequally the wealth which it produces and multiplies, it is without taking anything from those she least favours. The day labourer even (where civilization has bestowed her gifts) is better off than the most favoured individuals in communities yet uncivilized; and where the wisdom of the laws properly guarantees the safety of person and property, the continual progress of the arts and industry ensures to their toil a recompence which, continually increasing, frees them more and more from the attacks of indigence. Their number, then, becomes of little consequence; for if it augment, wealth increases still more rapidly, and its accumulation brings to them new and larger means of advantage.

Such is the march of events in all prosperous countries. The population has increased in France in the last 13 years 8 per cent., wealth more than 16 per cent. If the classes of proprietors have seen their fortunes augment, the classes which live by their daily labour have seen the fund which remunerates their toil increase yet more rapidly than the hands which divide it.

Nothing in these observations is dictated by an inconsiderate optimism. They would act in opposition to my object, if they tended to diminish that anxiety which ought to be felt for the poorer classes, or contract the exertions and sacrifices destined to secure for them, through the blessings of education, new sources of comfort and of moral and intellectual improvement. But there are facts operating on society, directed by a higher wisdom than that of man; and when the laws of inheritance in a country give no exclusive privileges—when they leave every one free to advance to the utmost limit of his faculties—when they allow no other claims of right than degrees of relationship,—we may presume that they are not to be found fault with, and that the results emanating from them are, at the time even that they are produced, the most conformable to the real interests of all.

Contributions to a Knowledge of the Influence of Employments upon Health. By WILLIAM AUGUSTUS GUY, M. B. Cantab. Professor of Forensic Medicine, King's College, and Physician to King's College Hospital. Hon. Sec.

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It is extremely difficult to determine the real influence of employments upon health; for, on the one hand, employments closely resembling each other in character may be associated with very dissimilar habits of life; and, on the other, employments having nothing in common may be combined with some one bad habit which may be sufficiently powerful to render all of them unhealthy. Again, occupations, in themselves rather unhealthy than otherwise, may appear free from injurious results,